

**Bourne**  
**toWrite...**  
creative writing  
workshops

## Brain Freeze

by Juliet Robinson

For a long time, I did not move from the dark wood panelled hall. It was peaceful here, dust motes swirled in shafts of sunlight that lanced in from the tall windows. A sense of timelessness held sway; but it couldn't last, I had to break the news to them sometime.

The squad were lounging around after breakfast. With no active-duty roles scheduled till this afternoon they had returned to the ward.

*Nope.*

For a long time, I did not move from the dark wood panelled hall. I germinated in the rotting carpet, slowly sending out tendrils, pulling in nutrients. They were scarce but the wind dragged in leaves and other fodder. I started to grow upwards, seeking light. The more I grew the more food I needed. A bad winter brought down half the ceiling and water flooded in. It ate away at the woodwork, which rotted and flaked. I dined on the carbon it released.

*Yeah, not feeling that.*

For a long time, I did not move from the dark wood panelled hall. I love the start of a new school year. So much potential, all these new students. I could sense their nervous excitement, it pulsed through the heavy oak door. What fun I was about to have. I lingered a little longer, savouring the moment. Then I spun, whiffled through the wall and introduced myself to the newbies. Oh how they screamed, this never grows old.

*Hmm, too cliched. The dark wood panelling paved the way for this to be a ghost story.*

For a long time, I did not move from the dark wood panelled hall. The place was dripping with wealth. We had chosen wisely when we picked this monastery. The monks here had gold pouring from their pockets. Gold which would soon be mine.

*Oh, hang on, 'Frode, are you a Viking?'*

Down in the hallway Frode pauses and considers himself then looks up at me through the words I am trying to desperately to put together. He waves his sword and shield almost apologetically and smiles ruefully.

'It would appear so.' Cast out of the moment he sheathes his sword. 'I also resent the cliched story. Not all of us were raiders. Would someone please write an original story about my people?'

'Yeah, you have a point. Plus, wood panelling? That's way out of context. Those sorts of historical inaccuracies really bug me in books and films. Sorry Frode, I might see you in another story.'

He shrugs in an unfazed manner as I brushed his story aside.

*Now what.*

For a long time, I did not move from the dark wood panelled hall. I have been told the panelling comes from the same forest that ships of the armada were built from. Ships that went out and changed the world. It feels fitting therefore that Aldon Manor is now home to the Solar Worlds Project. A project responsible for charting habitable planets and sending out drone prospecting ships.

I wait and enjoy the calm before the storm. I am due up before the board who aren't going to be happy with the numbers this quarter. Funding is down, applications also. They are going to be pissed off, but I do have something that could turn things around.

A beautiful blue and green planet. Earth-like and in the goldilocks zone. This has come at exactly the right time; it is going to save our collective backsides.

The door opens and Elaine Cartwright's aide, Malcolm ushers me in. A huge oak table dominates the room, the board members are arrayed along its length. I am all too aware of their cool regard as I enter. For them it's always about money, not about exploration and discovery. Perhaps what I have to show them today will change that. Perhaps they will see the wonder of this new world.